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NSF vs. Housing for the Poor

How They Shaped Science Policy on Capitol Hill

The difficulty of explaining American science-policymaking to outsiders is that it is inexplicable. And nowhere is this better seen than in the annual Congressional deliberations on budget shares for research and development.

On the House side, with the Senate still to act on most matters, the latest rounds took place in the few weeks preceding Congress's departure August 4 for a month's vacation. In that time, in largely superficial, spiritless debate, the House absentmindedly dismissed the grand budget-growth plan that the White House has endorsed for the National Science Foundation. The subject was not even discussed. Indecisive about whether to proceed with the space station—for which no useful purpose or plausible budget have been offered—the House split the difference by voting to proceed on a modestly pared budget. And, yielding to a powerful lobbying campaign, which featured chimerical assurances of imminent foreign support, it voted startup construction money for the Superconducting Super Collider.

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The plight of NSF is particularly bizarre since the Foundation's fiscal fortunes are little affected by Congressional attitudes toward science, which tend to be sweet. If politicians' praise for NSF could be turned into cash, the Foundation would be rolling. The bane of NSF's legislative existence is its inclusion in a collection of disparate agencies that share the same pot of money in matching House and Senate subcommittees on Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Offices.

In addition to NSF and the veterans and housing departments, these subcommittees are responsible for financing NASA, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Selective Service System, the American Battle Monuments Commission and a number of other agencies. Pressing on all of them is Congress's determination to make up for the ravaging of federal housing programs during the Reagan Administration. There's also the political power of the veterans lobbies, now represented by a cabinet-level Department. And then there's NASA, threadbare after years of tight budgets dominated by the Shuttle, and now at the point where, even without the space station, billions more are needed to attain a respectable level of space activity.

Under deficit-induced budgetmaking procedures that aim to keep appropriations outgo within estimated revenue intake, the House Subcommittee was allotted $65 billion in budget authority for all its wards in fiscal 1990 (which begins October 1), an increase of about $4.5 billion above the current figure. From the first and most crucial step in the appropriations process, the verdict of the House Subcommittee, out came a bill that fell just within the $65 billion limit. But the sum fell within the limits only because of strange acrobatics and substantial cuts that the Subcommittee made in the budget proposed by the White House, particularly for NASA and NSF.

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In Brief

Washington's zestful academic lobbying industry has been thrown into turmoil by Senate Appropriations Chairman Robert Byrd of West Virginia. Byrd reacted angrily upon learning that the University of West Virginia had engaged the legendary Cassidy & Associates to get $18 million for a research building. That's what I'm here for, Byrd snarled, as he blocked the appropriation and introduced legislation requiring disclosure of lobbying activities and a ban on financing them with federal funds.

Cassidy, the leading firm in the field, is tightlipped about its fees. But SGR hears that the minimum for academic representation is $20,000 per month, with two years' payment up front, plus expenses. The Byrd amendment faces stiff lobbying.

NSF, in response to Congressional mandate, has published a plan for a new program of campus laboratory construction and renovation. Among the major features: 50-percent cost-sharing by non-federal sources; range of awards, $100,000 to $7 million, and only one proposal per institution per year. However, NSF has no money specifically earmarked for buildings, and the prospects of getting any are dim. The rules are in *Modernizing Academic Research Facilities: A Comprehensive Plan* (47 pp., no charge; order from: NSF, Research Facilities Office, Room 1240, 1800 G St. NW, Washington, DC 20550; tel. 202/357-9785).

In a tough budget year, NIH is growing, but slower than usual. The current budget is $7.145 billion. For 1990, the White House requested $7.530 billion. The House voted $7.678 billion. Among the few reductions voted: $38 million cut from a $62 million request for the National Center on Human Genome Research. The Appropriations report deemed the reduced budget "more appropriate" and called for a "comprehensive spending plan" with the 1991 budget request.

. . . "Saving" Money by Shifting A Federal Pay Day

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Repeating a theme that's regularly heard these days on Capitol Hill, the Chairman of the Subcommittee, Bob Traxler (D-Mich.), introduced his bill on July 20 by stating: "Regretfully, we do not have enough money to fund the full needs of the departments, agencies, and fine programs which are in this bill." That's the sad fact of the matter, Traxler explained, despite a fanciful scheme to reduce fiscal 1990 spending by $359 million by issuing the first federal-employe paychecks of that year on the last day of fiscal 1989. The procedure, of course, would save nothing, but given the fiscal bind that arises from an unwillingness to raise taxes or cut spending, illusion is the only available answer.

But even with the payday shift, Traxler continued, his Subcommittee had to cut $1.1 billion from the $13.2 billion that the President requested for NASA (leaving $1.6 billion for the space station). And it cut $150 million from the $2.1 billion sought for NSF. In both cases, the two agencies would be getting more than they had received for 1989—$1.5 billion more for NASA and $76 million more for NSF. But not as much more as the President had proposed for them.

In contrast, the Subcommittee added large sums to the budgets proposed for the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs. The White House wanted to hold HUD close to this year's $12.7 billion budget, but the Subcommittee upped the sum by $2.2 billion. The Department of Veterans Affairs was actually budgeted for a reduction by the White House—from $29.3 billion this year to $28.6 next year. But the Subcommittee voted to raise the next budget to $29.5 billion, an increase of $180 million.

Traxler concluded his summary and explanation of the bill, and a listless "debate" began. Several members praised Traxler, who was in his floor debut as successor to the retired Subcommittee Chairman Edward Boland (D-Mass.). Rep. Silvio O. Conte (R-Mass.) lauded Traxler, saying he "has somehow managed to load 20 pounds of program into a 10-pound sack." But once past the forensic courtesies, Conte turned to a most serious matter, the small downpayment on NASA's unbounded "multi-multi-billion" space-station plans.

"As we have yet to articulate a clear space policy," Conte said, "this commitment seems premature. Of more serious concern, we have no idea where the money to finance these grandiose programs is going to come from. If you think money is tight this year, just wait until next year. And if we keep pumping billions upon billions of dollars into space programs without a clear sense of purpose, we will further restrict our ability to house the homeless, feed the hungry, and educate our young."

Conte, an ardent supporter of biomedical research, found a number of items in the bill praiseworthy, including the designation of the White House Science Office as the lead agency for the "Decade of the Brain," which starts in 1990, by Act of Congress. And the Massachusetts Congressman approvingly observed that the bill contained $20 million "to help clean up Boston Harbor."

Rep. Jamie Whitten (D-Miss.), who chairs the full Appropriations Committee, took the floor to express approval of the bill, including a $121 million item for a NASA solid-rocket program in his district. He was followed by Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), who limited his remarks to praise for $500,000 for a pollution project in his district and expressions of concern about the delivery of further funding.

Then came Rep. Leon E. Panetta (D-Calif.), Chairman of the House Budget Committee. The proposed payday change, he said, "is the worst kind of smoke and mirrors and accounting games." He urged the House to discard it.

Chairman Traxler responded that he wished "to extend deep appreciation to the distinguished Chairman of the Committee on the Budget." Whereupon, Rep. Bill Frenzel (R-Minn.) raised a point of order about the payday shift. Traxler, apparently recognizing the risks of defending an absurdity, conceded the point. The $359 million in "savings" were thus eliminated, putting the bill over the limit by that amount, and thus requiring, at that moment or later in the Congressional session, a commensurate cut in the bill's total. The need for a reckoning went unnoted and thus was put off to another time.

The debate then proceeded to its one potentially serious moment—a proposal for only a modest increase, rather than a big jump, in spending on the space station, introduced by Rep. Charles E. Schumer (D-NY). Noting that President Bush had on that day—the 20th anniversary of the first moon landing—expressed support for a manned moon-to-Mars program, Schumer said: "That will cost us $400 billion, and we cannot have space exploration by press release. We must have space exploration by money. Once we talk about money, we must have choices."

The choices posed by Schumer were: "Fund programs

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. . .Does the American Legion Back Space Station?

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for our veterans, our children, our elderly, or give an increase in funding for the space station," which, he noted, was budgeted in the bill for an 84 percent increase, atop the $900 million appropriated for this year. Schumer instead proposed a 4 percent increase, an amount that he said would be "enough to keep up with inflation, but transfers money to critically needed service programs around the country."

Schumer contended that his space-station position had many supporters, including, he stressed, the American Legion. This claim was challenged by Rep. Robert S. Walker (R-Pa.), who declared, "The American Legion states that they do not support the gentleman's amendment." Schumer replied: "We will show the gentleman from Pennsylvania the letter." The issue of the Legion's position was left unresolved, as Schumer proceeded to list others who he said opposed the space station. He declared that "Even Ronald Reagan's science adviser, George Keyworth, called the space station 'an unfortunate step backwards.'"

The best way to proceed in space, Schumer continued, is with the unmanned satellites that achieved important results in communications, navigation, research, and so forth. "Yet, these kinds of great programs are being slashed to make room for this huge, expensive, unwieldy, and unneeded space station."

Traxler replied that his Subcommittee had already cut $1 billion from the Administration's request for NASA and had been austere with many of the agencies in its jurisdiction, including the American Battle Monuments Commission, "a very tiny agency, incidentally, that cares for our overseas cemeteries, where our war heroes are buried. . ." (The Commission, which received $15,085,000 this year, was budgeted by the White House for $14,507,000 next year. Traxler's Subcommittee, from within its $65 billion allowance, produced an even $15 million—$85,000 less than last year's sum, but $493,000 above the President's budget for the grave-tending agency.)

Rep. Bill Green, of New York, the ranking Republican on Traxler's Subcommittee, warned that Schumer's proposed cut for NASA would leave the agency free to "keep the Space Station Program intact and take that money out of many other things that NASA is doing." If NASA is forced to slow development of the space station, Green continued, the ultimate cost would be considerably higher.

The debate was joined by one of the most fanatical supporters of the space station, Rep. Robert Roe (D-NJ), Chairman of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. "Space is not a luxury," Roe declared. "World communications would be impossible had we not entered into space... The security of the nation depends on our space program."

Schumer responded that the space station "has nothing to do with communications," adding that "it has no military applications, according to many generals." He was joined by Rep. James L. Oberstar (D-Minn.), who, noting unmet needs on earth ($12 billion for space, $5 billion "for cleaning up water on earth), argued that "for 10 percent of the cost of manned space, we can do all the science we need in outer space" with unmanned vehicles.

Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.) warned that today's $1.6

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Where Were NSF's Friends When Budget Was Cut?

Barely a word was said about NSF when the House, in passing a multi-agency appropriations bill on July 20, sharply reduced the White House budget request for the Foundation, thus further setting back the five-year plan to double NSF's budget, to $3.2 billion, by fiscal 1992.

NSF, with $1.922 billion this year (fiscal 1989), was generously budgeted by the White House for a 14 percent increase that would have raised its 1990 budget to $2.149 billion—a boost of $227 million. But the House, endorsing virtually without change the recommendations of its NSF Appropriations Subcommittee, voted for $1.999 billion—$150 million less than requested.

The budget-doubling plan, proposed for fiscal 1988 by Reagan, endorsed by Bush, and widely lauded on Capitol Hill, has thus fallen so far behind schedule that even if a reprieve is won in the Senate—which seems unlikely—NSF will still remain far off the growth pace designed to help satisfy its clamoring academic clients.

The budget that the House voted for NSF would have been lower by $65 million but for the Subcommittee's last-minute discovery that that amount had been erroneously included twice in the budget of NASA, an appropriations stablemate of the Foundation. At the suggestion of Chairman Bob Traxler (D-Mich.), the $65 million was allotted to NSF. Without it, the recommended budget would have been $215 million below the White House request.

Charging that NSF has "severely shortchanged" science education—an old complaint on Capitol Hill—the House directed NSF to spend $210 million in that category, rather than the $190 million budgeted by the White House. The extra $20 million was earmarked for pre-college teacher preparation.

Where are the Congressional friends of NSF? The answer is that "little science," the principle business of NSF, does not have a politically organized constituency, and no Member was inclined to get into a bloody battle in these deficit-conscious days to raise a few extra bucks for NSF.

Bush Science Aide Sworn in and Goes on Vacation

The resuscitation of Presidential science advice continues at an unhurried pace that mocks the campaign pledges of George Bush and the importance attached to the role by the chiefs of the science establishment.

Seven months into the Bush Administration, the long-known choice for Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), D. Allan Bromley, of Yale, has at last been officially installed. But he's not there now. Sworn into office on August 4, the day after the Senate confirmed his nomination, Bromley immediately went on vacation until August 20, according to an OSTP staff member.

Meanwhile, there are many rumors about the restaffing of OSTP, which dwindled to a handful of members and near-invisibility in the neglectful years of the Reagan era. The most interesting is that Bromley's chief aide for biomedical matters will be James B. Wyngaarden, who stepped down July 31 after seven years as Director of the National Institutes of Health—a post which the Bush Administration asked him to vacate. Confirmation of this report is not to be had. But prior to leaving NIH, Wyngaarden said he wants to remain involved with biomedical-policy issues and that he had not made a job decision (SGR May 15: "Departing NIH Head Looks Back on Seven Years").

Mentioned for chief of international affairs for OSTP is J. Thomas Ratchford, No. 2 to the three most recent Executive Officers of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Ratchford, a former Congressional committee staff member, has known Bromley for many years. Still at the AAAS, where he has been assigned new responsibilities in a major reorganization of the Association's internal structure, Ratchford is silent about an OSTP job. But when Bromley was recently unable to meet with the visiting West German Science Minister, Ratchford was offered as a second choice; the Minister declined.

Another name that comes up, for handling OSTP press relations, is Allan Hammond, founder and editor of the AAAS magazine *Science 86* when it folded three years ago. Hammond subsequently founded a newsletter, *Science Impact*, which recently ceased publication.

The prospects for speed in restaffing OSTP are doubtful. By statute, the office is allotted four presidentially appointed assistant directors. But if Bromley's own experience is indicative, the pace will be slow. It was on April 20 that the White House announced its intention to nominate him. But because of the jammed clearance process for Presidential appointees, the nomination was not submitted to the Senate until June 6. And it wasn't brought up for a hearing until July 21.

That calendar of events was not what the National Academy of Sciences and assorted allies had in mind when they urged the presidential candidates to engage a science adviser soon after election day. Candidate Bush answered with assurances that he greatly valued science advice, and then let four months go by before the choice of Bromley was announced.

Bromley was quick, responsive, and informative at his confirmation hearing, a marathon event that ran without interruption from 9:35 a.m. to 12:50 p.m. The length, extremely unusual for a shoo-in nominee to a relatively minor post in the federal hierarchy, was mainly due to unhindered bouts of loquacity on the part of Senator Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), who chaired the hearing, before the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. A word count would surely show that Gore outspoke the sole witness by a substantial margin.

Gore, now in his first year as chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space, earned visibility as a House member during 1977-84 by working on science-related issues—particularly genetic engineering. And he made it clear at the confirmation session that he's staking out national science policy as a prime issue. (His staff is assembling a big hearing on that subject, tentatively scheduled for September.) While yielding now and then to other Senators, who dropped in and out of the Bromley hearing,

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Appropriations

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billion budget for the space station would rise to $3 billion in 18 months. Congress should tell the President, he said, "'Don't sell the country on this grandiose plan until you've got a way to pay for it.'"

The medical-spinoff argument was then invoked, with NASA being wildly credited as the fount of wondrous therapies. Rep. Mary Rose Oakar (D-Ohio) advised space-station opponents "to go and ask the woman who has had cataract surgery if the space program is not important to her." Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) said that "NASA space programs have provided medical advances such as insulin-infusion pumps, reading machines for the blind, ocular screening systems to detect eye problems in children, and laser heart surgery."

Shortly afterwards, the Schumer amendment was defeated, 291-125.

The appropriations bill remained the subject of floor debate for another hour or so, but the members stayed away from the basic issue that had gone down to defeat in the Schumer amendment: priorities. Space Chairman Roe stuck in an amendment earmarking $98 million in NASA funds for the National Aerospace Plane, another burgeoning high-tech mega-monster whose vast bills won't be arriving for another few years. Several minor legislative items were discussed and quickly dealt with. And then without a recorded vote, the House passed the $65 billion appropriations bill for the Department of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies.—DSG

. . . Request for OSTP Budget Rise Came too Late

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Gore indicated that his self-assigned task was to get the President's Science Adviser on the record about virtually every aspect of science policy and presidential science advising.

Though pleading weariness from a Senate session that ran until 1:30 that morning, Gore then proceeded to query and lecture Bromley to an extent that had spectators in the hearing room shaking their heads and exchanging puzzled comments.

Though the Science Adviser is a minor member of the President's official family, Gore advised Bromley to emulate the freelance advocacy role of Surgeon General C. Everett Koop. "He chose not to self-censor," Gore said in urging Bromley to speak out in behalf of science.

Bromley gave a non-committal nod to the advice to become a maverick. In response to a seemingly endless barrage of questions, he said many university research facilities are in poor shape, but the universities bear some blame because of unrealistic expectations about federal funding. His access to the President, he said, remained to be worked out, but he felt confident about a good relationship. Basic research, he said, should be free of security restrictions, but technology sometimes involves military and economic considerations. "Precollege education," he said, "is nothing short of scandalous." Heightened university entrance requirements "would focus the attention of parents," he said, and thus prod the schools to make improvements. Research grants should run for longer periods. Big science can hurt little science, but both are important—though when pushed by Gore, Bromley said that little science merits special protection against budget pressures.

Regarding the operations of OSTP, he said that the President had promised to raise the office's budget by $1 million, to a total of $3 million, but the request had arrived too late for inclusion in the recently passed supplemental appropriations bill. Gore noted that the White House Science Office staff numbered 55 in the Kennedy Administration, and had fallen to 10 under Bromley's predecessor, William R. Graham. Bromley said that the Office of Management and Budget was trying to get that additional $1 million for his first year at OSTP, and that he and OMB Director Richard Darman had a "gentleman's agreement" for a $4 million budget for the second year.

Bromley also said that specialists in the social sciences and industrial technology will be appointed to the OSTP staff and that membership would soon be announced for a senior advisory body, to be known as the President's Council of Science and Technology Advisers.

The new Science Adviser, self-confident and gregarious, drew high marks for his confirmation performance from a room crowded with well-wishing acquaintances and Washington science-policy watchers.

But the circumstances facing Bromley are not the best. He arrives late in an Administration that has worked out its alliances, turf management, and priorities. He comes without close political connections or a politically useful constituency base. And he must avoid the appearance of being the onboard lobbyist for science.

But there's a big opportunity that Bromley can exploit: the Bush Administration is intellectually passive and bereft of ideas. Domestically, it's running a holding operation, while internationally, it responds to Gorbachev, but initiates almost nothing. What it lacks is an idea man. That could be Bromley's big chance.

Federal Tech-Transfer Act Spurs Activity, Study Says

Contrasting rumbles of ideological discontent and impatience are occasionally heard about the Federal Technology Transfer Act (FTTA) of 1986, a Reagan creation designed to give private industry access to research in federal labs.

However, extensive evidence has been lacking on what's going on out there in the government's sprawling research empire, which annually spends some $20 billion inhouse. Now there's the first comprehensive accounting of activities under the FTTA, a required biennial report to Congress by the Secretary of Commerce.

The Federal Technology Transfer Act of 1986: The First Two Years, A report to Congress by the Secretary of Commerce (39 pp., no charge; order from: Department of Commerce, Office of Technical Communications, Room 4204, Washington, DC 20230; tel. 202/377-5804)

The report indicates that after a slow start, the tech-transfer program is picking up speed toward its prescribed goal of promoting commercialization of federal research. That's unfortunate, in the view of those who regard the act as a license to pilfer publicly financed research for private gain.

On the other hand, viewed against that $20 billion enterprise, the results obtained so far are paltry and are thus discouraging to those who feel the federal R&D establishment is disengaged from the country's economic problems. But to complicate the picture, the report also suggests that foreign firms may be outperforming their American competitors in taking advantage of the open-door policy for federal labs.

The report states that as of the end of fiscal 1988 (last September 30), 111 Cooperative Research and Development Agreements had been agreed upon, or nearly so, by private organizations and federal research agencies. Under these agreements, federal scientists receive at least 15 percent of royalties that the agencies collect from private firms using their research. However, the report notes that many agencies pay far more than the minimum.

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. . . NIH Reporting Five New Agreements a Month

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On the basis of data that's nearly a year old, the number of agreements per agency were listed as: Agriculture, 39; Health and Human Services (mainly NIH), 29; Air Force, 17; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 10; Army, 7; Interior, 6; VA, 2, and EPA, 1. NASA, with a long tradition of attention to technology transfer, uses its own accounting system and was not included in the present report but will be examined later on, the report said.

Some of these agreements either pre-dated the FTTA or could have been negotiated under previous tech-transfer arrangements, the report states. But it also notes a quickening pace in agency-industry agreements since the FTTA went into effect. "The incentives to federal scientists appear to be working beyond expectations. Agencies have been generous in using their royalty-sharing authority, in some cases allowing inventors to retain as much as 35 percent of the royalty income. The number of reported inventions increased by more than 40 percent in some agencies between FY 1987 and FY 1988."

NIH, the report said, is "now processing approximately five proposed R&D agreements each month," while the National Institute of Standards and Technology (formerly the National Bureau of Standards) reported that since the end of fiscal 1988, its agreements have risen from 10 to 28.

The formulas for reward vary from agency to agency, the report says, while pointing out that "the agreements under the FTTA are too new to have generated any significant royalty income." The only reported amounts are minuscule, relative to agency R&D budgets: The National Technical Information Service, which even prior to the FTTA served as a licensing agency for federally owned patents, reported that royalties increased from $1.5 million in fiscal 1985 to $5.6 million in fiscal 1988. Of the latter amount, inventors received $356,200. At the Department of Energy's contractor-operated laboratories, royalties rose from $144,000 in fiscal 1985 to $584,000 in fiscal 1988.

The military services allow their inventors to keep 20 percent or the first $1000, whichever is greater. At NIH and several of the other research agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, inventors get 25 percent of the first $50,000 in royalties, 20 percent of the next $50,000, and 15 percent of any additional royalties.

The Food and Drug Administration, however, lets staff inventors keep 15 percent until program costs are recovered and then 35 percent of any additional royalties. At the Environmental Protection Agency, inventors get a flat 35 percent of all royalties.

The report noted that under the FTTA and the 1988 trade act, federal laboratory directors are to consider reciprocity when foreigners seek access to their research facilities. American firms, the report states, have been asked to report on difficulties of access abroad, but the Commerce Department says it has received "some information as to potential problems but no specific, identifiable cases of governmentally imposed barriers to US participation in foreign R&D programs.

"This response," the report continues, "is not surprising, given that the concept of conducting R&D with foreign research institutions is generally new to American industry. US firms, until recently, have shown only limited interest in working with federal facilities, much less with those operated by foreign governments. Many domestic companies are skeptical as to whether invitations from foreign entities to enter into such agreements are made in good faith or are attempts to tap into our existing technology base."

To which it adds: "Foreign nations have been remarkably adept at identifying the sources of valuable technology in the United States that will lead to new products. . . . It would be ironic if these foreign firms prove themselves to be more farsighted in identifying opportunities for cooperation with federal facilities—and in reaping the attendant technological advantages—than our domestic companies."

Job Changes & Appointments

John A. Knauss, longtime and recently retired Dean of the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, was confirmed August 3 as Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, which also makes him chief of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He succeeds ***William E. Evans,*** who has been appointed Dean of the Texas A&M Maritime College at Galveston.

Gary E. Evans has been appointed Special Assistant for Global Change Issues on the staff of ***Charles E. Hess***, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Science and Education. Evans formerly was Deputy Administrator of the Agricultural Research Service. Hess said that Evans will be responsible for planning and coordinating USDA responses to climate changes.

Robert I. Van Hook, Associate Director of the Environmental Sciences Division at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), has been appointed Director of a newly established ORNL Center for Global Environmental Studies. The Center, which will be housed in the Environmental Sciences Division, will focus on largescale, longterm studies, according to an ORNL announcement.

SGR Summer Schedule

Science & Government Report is on its regular summertime publication schedule, which means one issue per month in July, August, and September, after which the twice-monthly schedule resumes.

Pitt President Recants Threat to "Whistle-blower"

The President of the University of Pittsburgh has issued a crawling apology for a threatening letter that a Pittsburgh official wrote to a Congressional witness who accused the University of a "cover-up" in a case of scientific fraud. The apology came, SGR has learned, after Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), who's been investigating scientific misconduct, advised the Pitt President that his Subcommittee "has a longstanding interest in the protection of those who report misconduct."

The threatening letter, dated July 12, was written by George A. Huber, Vice President and Counsel of the Medical and Health Division, University of Pittsburgh, to Professor Robert Sprague, of the Institute for Research and Human Development, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

It was Sprague who, after a lengthy struggle with indifferent Pitt and federal officials, brought down Stephen E. Breuning, a once-celebrated research psychologist, formerly at Pitt, who pleaded guilty in federal court last year to faking data on tranquillizer dosages for severely retarded children.

In prepared testimony for a hearing before Dingell on June 28, Sprague charged that Pitt "tried to cover up the misconduct [by Breuning] and reported to NIMH [the National Institute of Mental Health, which funded Breuning's research] that it 'could find no serious fault with Dr. Breuning's activities.'"

Huber's letter described Sprague's remarks as "slanderous and libelous," demanded that Sprague "desist from any similar false statements in the future," and warned: "If you do not immediately stop making these erroneous statements, we will take whatever lawful corrective measures are necessary and appropriate, including the filing of legal action, to require you to do so."

In a response to Dingell's assertion of interest in the protection of Congressional witnesses, the President of Pitt, Wesley W. Posvar, wrote on July 20: "In respect to the testimony of Dr. Sprague before your committee, I myself find the tone of Dr. Huber's letter to be intemperate. Whatever misunderstandings there may be about this matter, I applaud Dr. Sprague's own endeavors to support research integrity." He added that he had asked Pitt officials to prepare a report on the Breuning case.

In a follow-up letter dated July 28, Posvar told Dingell that the inquiry did not support the allegation of a cover-up. "However, the report does show that the former Dean of our School of Medicine did not sustain his investigation of Dr. Breuning with what I view as sufficient zeal, particularly after Dr. Breuning had been forced to resign from our faculty."

Posvar added: "Indeed, I commend Dr. Sprague for vigilance in bringing Dr. Breuning's misconduct forward and for his continued assistance in helping protect the integrity of academic research."

The inquiry ordered by President Posvar, conducted by Lewis M. Popper, University Counsel, reported that Pitt can be "legitimately criticized for preoccupation with Dr. Breuning's research conducted at Coldwater [a Pennsylvania institution where he worked prior to joining Pitt], while failing to investigate his studies at this university."

Breuning pleaded guilty last year to two counts of providing false information on grant-renewal applications to the National Institute of Mental Health. He received a two-year suspended sentence, 60 days of work-release, and an order to repay $11,352 in research funds to Pitt, where he was a researcher when Sprague flagged his fraudulent work (SGR, November 15, 1988).—DSG

In Print

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National Center for Health Statistics Catalog of Publications: 1980-88 (27 pp., no charge), lists hundreds of single and serial publications produced by the principle federal agency for health data, including vital and health statistics, health-care financing and utilization, international comparisons, etc. Order forms are included.

Order from: Scientific and Technical Information Branch, Division of Data Services, Room 157, National Center for Health Statistics, 3700 East-West Highway, Hyattsville, Md. 20872; tel. 301/436-8500.

Small Business: Proposed Amendments to the Small Business Innovation Research Program (GAO/RCED-89-173, 22 pp.), advises against expansion and permanent status for the Small Business Innovation Research Program, which requires federal research agencies to award 1.25 percent of their external research funds to small businesses. GAO says the six-year-old program is too young to judge its worth.

Order from: GAO, PO Box 6015, Gaithersburg, Md. 20877; tel. 202/275-6241.

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In Print: "Science Outlook," Misconduct, Ozone

The publications listed are obtainable as indicated—not from SGR.

Science and Technology Report and Outlook: 1985-1988 (186 pp., no charge), from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), illustrates the futility of Congress pushing the White House to formulate and follow a long-range science-policy. That's what Capitol Hill sought in mandating several big-picture reports in the 1976 law that reversed Nixon's abolition of onboard Presidential science advice. Successive science advisers, however, saw it as make-work nuisance, and the required reports were combined into one under the Congressional Reports Elimination Act of 1982. Since then, the surviving report appears on an unpredictable now-and-then schedule—the report for 1982-1984 coming out in October 1985, with the latest (for 1985-88) appearing in mid-1989, a delay sanctioned in a deal between OSTP and the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. With staff assistance commandeered from NSF, the Report and Outlook heavily relies on boiler plate lifted from research agency PR pamphlets, plus praise for the science-policy wisdom of the President at the time of writing. Mercy, if not economy, calls for making this the last of an ill-conceived line.

Order from: Office of Science and Technology Policy, NEOB, 725 -17th St. NW, Room 5013, Washington, DC 20506; tel. 202/395-4692.

Scientific Misconduct in Academia: Efforts to Address the Issue (89-392 SPR, 35 pp., no charge), report to the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee by the Science Policy Research Division (SPRD) of the Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, records the science establishment's late and hurried efforts to assure Congress that it is alert and responsive to the problem of ethical lapses in the lab. Written by SPRD analysts Marilyn J. Littlejohn and Christine M. Matthews, the report nicely summarizes the basic issues and various proposed responses.

Order from: Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, Rayburn House Office Building, Room B-374, Washington, DC 20515; tel. 202/225-4494.

Survey of State Government Legislation on Biotechnology (19 pp., no charge), by the Industrial Biotechnology Association (IBA), says that since its last quarterly report (May 1), there's been an increase in state legislative activity concerning biotechnology. Most of the new bills "are positive," says an IBA press release. Among the most active areas of legislative concern are environmental release, bovine somatotropin, DNA fingerprinting, and fetal research.

Order from: Industrial Biotechnology Association, Suite 1100, 1625 K St. NW, Washington, DC 20006; tel. 202/857-0244.

Catching Our Breath: Next Steps for Reducing Urban Ozone (full report, GPO Stock No. 052-003-01158-1, 250 pp., $10; summary, GPO Stock No. 052-003-01159-0, 24 pp., $1.75) produced as technical backup for reauthorization of the Clean Air Act, states that in heavily affected areas, currently available methods cannot attain safe levels of volatile organic compounds (VOC) and nitrogen oxides, precursors of ozone, but that substantial reductions can nonetheless be achieved. The report also notes that ozone research is poorly financed though it is "probably the least understood" among serious pollutants.

Order from: Superintendent of Documents, USGPO, Washington, DC 20402-9325; tel. 202/783-3238.

Project Summaries: NSF Division of Science Resources Studies (NSF 88-336, 90 pp., no charge), eighth in an annual series from the NSF division responsible for R&D statistics and science-policy studies, lists inhouse and extramural publications in progress or completed in Fiscal Year 1988, along with a bibliography back to 1979, and instructions for ordering publications.

Order from: NSF, Science Resources Studies, 1800 G St. NW, Washington, DC 20550; tel. 202/634-4634.

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